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SUBJECT: KABILA AND BEMBA HOLD FIRST POST-ELECTION MEETING

REF: A. KINSHASA 1439
[1](#)B. KINSHASA 1707

[1](#)1. (U) Presidential candidates Joseph Kabila and Jean-Pierre Bemba met November 7 for the first time since the October 29 run-off vote. The meeting, at the Presidential Palace in Kinshasa, was only the second time the two have been seen in public together since the August 20-22 shootout between their supporters. They last met on September 13 (ref A).

[1](#)2. (U) The discussion was private, and neither spoke to the press afterward. Kinshasa newspaper accounts described the meeting as cordial, with front-page pictures of Kabila and Bemba shaking hands afterward.

[1](#)3. (U) A statement released by Kabila's spokesman later in the day stated the two candidates discussed the progress of the vote count and the overall electoral process. It said both will respect the "verdict of the ballot boxes" and called in the name of both candidates on the Congolese people to remain calm and refrain from any acts of violence. It promised additional meetings between the two before and after announcement of results.

[1](#)4. (U) This meeting, like the one in September, was preceded by visits to both candidates by foreign dignitaries. The four African ex-presidents who met with them November 4-5 had encouraged them to meet face-to-face to discuss measures to maintain a smooth post-election period (ref B). Their September 13 meeting followed visits by African and European diplomats only days before

[1](#)5. (SBU) Comment: The Kabila-Bemba encounter is a positive step in creating conditions whereby both candidates -- and their camps -- peacefully accept the announcement of provisional election results. The general population is also likely to be reassured by the publicized meeting. While holding a one-on-one meeting had been discussed for some while, the recent visit by the four African ex-presidents was likely a contributing factor in bringing the two candidates together. End comment.

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